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NEWS

Cynthia Randall uses art background to curate Winchester's Riverwalk

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

September 20, 2024 . 6:00 AM — 6 min read

Winchester Cultural District board member Cynthia Randall with the newest Riverwalk sculpture, 'Away,' by artist Dale Rogers. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Cynthia Randall has a bit of a reputation. She's a hardworking an
dedicated volunteer with the Winchester Cultural District and if y

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in a bind, she's the one who can usually fix things.

"I know how to do this," says Randall, of her well-earned moniker as a troubleshooter. "I have enough friends I can reach out to and I come from an art background."

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The dancer sculpture 'Ikumi' by John BonSignore at 500 Main St. has a new companion, 'Mizu,' as part of the 2024 Winchester Cultural Council update to the Riverwalk. COURTESY PHOTO/CYNTHIA RANDALL

Winchester Cultural District President Hilda Wong-Doo knows Randall will shrug off any praise, but says the long-time Winchester resident has been "amazingly resourceful" when it comes to finding solutions to any and every roadblock Arts Winchester has encountered, especially with the Riverwalk sculpture exhibits.

Wong-Doo adds it's not unusual to find Randall walking around town, adjusting signs or pulling weeds. But that's just a tiny bit of what she's done.

"Cynthia curates and leads the sculpture exhibit, but she does so much more," she says. "From finding art for selection, to negotiating with artists and art associations, to placement of art, to designing the signs and logos, to weeding around the art, to volunteering at beer gardens, to reviewing grants, and so much more.

"In addition to her leadership on the sculpture exhibit, Cynthia advises on all aspects of what we do as a board," she adds. "Winchester and Arts Winchester are so lucky to have her. I am so grateful for her contributions."

Randall, also a member of the board, says she just loves what she does.

"I love art," she says. "My whole career has been in art, but now I'm retired. It's been a nice collaboration between me and Hilda. She gets the grants and I feel like I use my expertise for Winchester."

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Cynthia Randall with another of the new sculptures, also by Dale Rogers, entitled 'Bird in Hand.' WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

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Randall and Wong-Doo met two years ago when Randall decided it was time to get involved with something in town. Although she'd been involved with the Winchester Foundation for Educational Excellence and committed to the ABC House, it had been a while.

"I was thinking I wanted to get involved again," Randall says, adding she headed over to the Farmers Market and scouted the different organizations looking for volunteers. "I was thinking about the high school so I went to that table and Hilda was there. She said she wanted to try to get sculptures in town and I said, 'I can do that!'"

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The Riverwalk

Randall finds it interesting she met Wong-Doo that day on the Town Common because their interests seemed to mesh so well. With her background in working with large scale design projects at the Museum of Fine Arts for 25 years before working at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, it seemed the perfect fit.

Randall immediately got to work with Wong-Doo, putting out a call for sculptures via the New England Sculptors Association, for the new Riverwalk project.

"We wrote up what we wanted," she explains. "We wanted a water theme because it was the Riverwalk. We wanted people to look at things that referred to nature or water."

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Artist R. Douglass Rice works to install 'Waterfowl' on the Riverwalk behind the Jenks Center in 2023. COURTESY PHOTOS/CYNTHIA RANDALL

If you don't know what the Riverwalk is, you're in for a treat. You can stroll along the Aberjona River from Judkins Pond to Mill Pond and tour the current Winchester Riverwalk exhibit, which is now anchored by five sculptures and augmented by an evolving web experience through an app called Hoverlay.

With grants, Winchester was able to pay each artist $2,000 for a one-year lease on their work for the Riverwalk, from September 2023 through September 2024.

"We chose four sculptures last year," Randall says. "We extended three [of the leases] and now we have two new ones. We've already installed them and they're by Town Hall."

Randall says it was important to pick different mediums for the artwork. This year, with a new theme of people and community, Randall says she and Wong-Doo went out and looked at some new pieces.

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"We went to Dale Rogers's studio in Haverhill," she says. "There was a silver one and Hilda liked one with the hands. It's the same artist, but two different styles. They were perfect for the show."

On a rainy day in 2023, volunteers ready 'Moonstruck' by David Adilman for placement on the Riverwalk. COURTESY PHOTOS/CYNTHIA RANDALL

She adds the silver sculpture, "Away," has been purchased with a grant from the En Ka Society and will remain on permanent display.

"It's reasonably priced and it's really good quality," Randall says, of the piece. "Our hope is to purchase a few more over the years, but we will also continue to lease and change [the art] out."

Moving forward, Randall says she wants to find more diverse art and artists for the exhibit, although who knows what the upcoming themes could be.

But for now, the newest sculptures will be ready to go in time for Spirit Weekend, which takes place from Friday, Sept. 20 to Sunday, Sept. 22. A guided tour of the Riverwalk will start at the Jenks Center, 109 Skillings Road, beginning at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, Sept 21.

Troubleshooter

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If you're thinking that Randall seems to have this project under control, you're right. But there have been some bumps along the way — like one of the exhibits being too heavy to be lifted into place or when the group had difficulty finding an insurer for the art or when there were bases missing for the artwork to be set upon or when....

Well, that's why Wong-Doo calls Randall.

"For me, it's not a big deal," she says.

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Cynthia Randall removes leaves from Moonstruck' by David Adilman. COURTESY PHOTO/CYNTHIA RANDALL

Sure, getting the project off the ground was tough. Randall says items like the descriptions that go with the artwork were labor intensive at f it's gotten easier.

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"I'm really happy to be doing this for the second year," she says. "I know there will be a lot of work, but it does get easier."

And the reactions from the community have made it meaningful.

"I've only read good things on Facebook," she says. "People show up for the Riverwalk tours. Overall, I'd say it's been very positive."

And of course, there's the art.

"I enjoy doing this a lot because it's a great idea," Randall says. "But one day I was by where the yellow one is installed and there as a father and a little girl there. The father said the little girl thought it looked like a big, yellow bird and it is called 'Waterfowl.' That makes it worth it."

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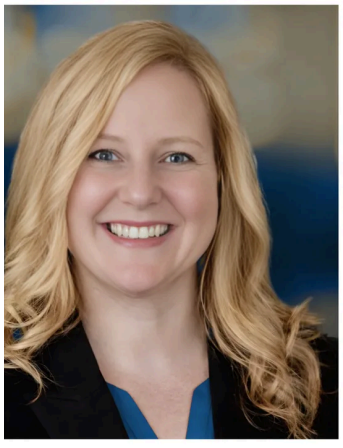

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Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Winchester gun owners face new training rules starting April 2

Public safety data How Winchester compares on firearms licenses in comparable Massachusetts communities Active licenses as of Jan. 25, 2025 — Source: Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board License to carry firearms Firearms identification card Winchester and Marblehead are the focus communities. Peers selected based on comparable population size, demographics and suburban

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

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March 4, 2026

Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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